

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the foundation of the study. It begins by discussing the background that motivated this research, followed by the identification of the research gap that this study seeks to address. The chapter then outlines the research questions, the purpose and scope of the study, and its theoretical and practical significance. Together, these components establish the rationale for examining Morrie Schwartz's utterances in *Tuesdays with Morrie* through the framework of illocutionary acts and provide the reader with a clear understanding of what this study aims to achieve and why it matters.

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a dynamic and multifaceted system that plays an essential role in communication, human interaction, culture, and society. It enables people to express their emotions, share cultural values and traditions, influence behavior, and shape identity and social relationships (Ropiyeva, 2024; Quagmire, 2025). According to Finegan (2008), language can be understood as an organized system of spoken signs that allows people to communicate with one another. Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Linguistics is the systematic study of human language, focusing on its structural features, its function in use, and the connection between these aspects, and the processes of language development and acquisition (Finegan, 2008). Linguistics examines language structure, use, and meaning

from various perspectives, including phonology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Among these branches, pragmatics is particularly concerned with meaning in use.

Meaning in language often goes beyond literal words. This concern is the core focus of pragmatics. According to Yule (2010), pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies the meaning intended by speakers and how listeners interpret implied meanings that are not directly expressed in an utterance. In this process, communication depends heavily on shared assumptions and expectations between speakers and hearers, which enable them to understand implied meanings within specific contexts. Language is used not only to communicate information but also to perform various actions, such as giving advice, making requests, making promises, and expressing opinions. As Austin (1962) explains, producing an utterance is not merely saying something but also performing an action through language. This concept emphasizes that language serves not only to communicate messages but also to perform social actions in everyday interaction.

In everyday interaction, these actions are often realized through speech acts. Speech act theory originally developed by J. L. Austin in his work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), and later refined by John R. Searle in *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (1979). Yule (1996) reinforces the idea by presents speech acts as an action that performed through utterances. According to Austin (1962), speech acts consist of three components: locutionary acts, which involve producing a

meaningful utterance; illocutionary acts, which refer to the speaker's intended communicative function; and perlocutionary acts, which are the effects that the utterance has on the hearer. Searle (1979) further categorizes illocutionary acts into five main types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This taxonomy has remained widely used in contemporary pragmatic research and helps explain how speakers perform different communicative functions when interacting with others.

Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson is a memoir written in 1997 by the American author Mitch Albom. The memoir tells the story of a series of weekly meetings between Mitch Albom and his former professor, Morrie Schwartz, during the final months of Morrie's life as he lives with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). In these conversations, Morrie shares his thoughts about important topics such as love, death, aging, relationships, and the purpose of life. Since the story mainly develops through dialogue, Morrie expresses his life lessons and advice directly through his spoken interactions with Mitch, making the memoir a valuable source for pragmatic analysis.

Several studies from the past decade have examined *Tuesdays with Morrie* across various perspectives. Suarniti (2019) focused on the values of life presented in the memoir and concluded that it contains both entertainment and educational values, including moral, social, and practical values applicable to daily life. In the same year, Efendi (2019) examined the translation of figurative language in the Indonesian version of the memoir and identified that most expressions were translated using formal

equivalence, with 2 major shifts in meaning influenced by translation processes.

Moving to more recent studies, Stončikaitė (2021) approached the memoir by focusing on the concept of later-life mentorship, highlights that aging can be viewed as a meaningful and positive lessons that guide future generations toward a sense of wholeness and wisdom. Sulastri et al., (2022) analyzed Morrie's character through existentialism theory proposed by Søren Kierkegaard and found that his acceptance of death and the way he continued to live meaningfully toward the end of his life reflect the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages of existence. Arthi & Suganya (2023) applied Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief to explain Morrie's emotional journey, concluding that his acceptance of his condition, specifically death, allows him to live with joy, love, and a clear sense of purpose.

In 2024 and 2025, the research expanded. Lariesto (2024) used Derrida's deconstructive theory to find the binary opposition, and revealed the fluidity of meaning found in the memoir. Similar to Arthi & Suganya who applied Kübler-Ross's model, Gamelia & Istiani (2025) discussed the stages of grief reflected through wisdom, and found that Morrie's grieving process is dynamic, reflecting emotional complexity and depth rather than a linear progression. Additionally, Edan (2025) analyzed the memoir using Choice Theory and argued that human satisfaction comes from conscious personal choices instead of being shaped mainly by external circumstances, as seen in Mitch's transformation. Meanwhile, Prameswari & Hadiyansyah (2025) employed Schema Theory to explain how readers understand and

relate to Morrie's words, highlighting that the most impactful messages are those that activate multiple schemas simultaneously by linking language, personal experience, and rhetorical structure.

Searle's categorization of illocutionary acts has also been used in a number of studies to examine literary works, especially novels. Mario (2018) examined 208 utterances from Khaled Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed* and found all five types of illocutionary acts present in the text, with directives emerging as the most dominant type. Similarly, Setiawan & Djajanegara (2020) analyzed both illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in John Connolly's *The Book of Lost Things*, identifying directives as the dominant illocutionary act across 50 dialogues and concluding that context plays a central role in shaping the speaker's communicative intention. Wahyudiantari et al. (2020) also found directives to be the most frequently used illocutionary act in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder*, with four out of five illocutionary act types identified in the data. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that Searle's taxonomy provides a solid framework for examining illocutionary acts in literary discourse and that the dominant type tends to reflect the relationship and power dynamics between characters.

Although previous studies have provided valuable insights into the themes, values, and psychological aspects of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, they primarily focus on what Morrie teaches rather than how those teachings are conveyed through language. In other words, the linguistic strategies used by Morrie to deliver his life lessons have received relatively little attention. Furthermore, none of these studies specifically focus on the mentor–protégé

relationship or investigate how the dominant type of illocutionary act reflects Morrie's role as a mentor.

This gap is significant because it provides a linguistic perspective on mentorship in literary discourse. By identifying and classifying Morrie's utterances through the framework of illocutionary acts, the research seeks to show how language functions not only to convey ideas but also to perform social roles. Furthermore, by examining the dominant illocutionary act type, this study attempts to explain how Morrie's mentoring role is reflected in the way he communicates with Mitch throughout the memoir.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze Morrie Schwartz's utterances in *Tuesdays with Morrie* using Searle's (1979) classification of illocutionary acts. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the types of illocutionary acts found in Morrie's speech and to examine how the dominance of a particular illocutionary act type reflects his role as a mentor in the memoir. Through this analysis, the study is expected to provide a linguistic perspective on how mentoring and life lessons are communicated in literary discourse.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the research background and the identified gap, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of illocutionary acts are found in Morrie Schwartz's utterances in *Tuesdays with Morrie*?
2. How does the dominance of a particular illocutionary act type in Morrie Schwartz's utterances reflect his role as a mentor in the memoir?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. To identify the types of illocutionary acts found in Morrie Schwartz's utterances in *Tuesdays with Morrie* based on Searle's (1979) classification.
2. To analyze the dominance of a particular type of illocutionary act in Morrie Schwartz's utterances and explain how this dominance reflects his role as a mentor in the memoir.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on Morrie Schwartz's utterances in *Tuesdays with Morrie* by Mitch Albom (1997). The analysis is limited to identifying and classifying illocutionary acts based on Searle's (1979) five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. The data of the study consist solely of Morrie's speech as presented in the dialogue sections of the text.

This study does not focus on comparing or analyzing direct and indirect speech acts in detail. The primary focus of this research is on the function of the language used by Morrie, particularly how illocutionary acts function to perform his role as a mentor in the memoir.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the field. On the theoretical level, it adds to the growing body of research that applies speech act theory to literary works, particularly in demonstrating how social roles and interpersonal dynamics are linguistically constructed and expressed through language. On the practical level, this study may deepen readers' understanding of how Morrie's role as a mentor is realized and communicated through his specific choices of language throughout the memoir. Furthermore, the findings and analytical approach of this study may serve as a useful reference for future researchers interested in examining speech acts in literary texts, memoirs, or other forms of dialogue-driven discourse.

1.6 State of the Art

Previous studies have explored *Tuesdays with Morrie* from different perspectives, such as moral values, philosophical messages, psychological aspects, and character analysis. In addition, speech act theory has been widely used to analyze various types of discourse, including films, political speeches, and classroom interactions. However, there are still limited studies that specifically examine the dominance of illocutionary acts in Morrie's utterances and relate it to his role as a mentor in the memoir. Therefore, this study offers a different perspective by analyzing Morrie's utterances through illocutionary acts.